

## CLAIMS

1. An information exchange support apparatus for supporting  
exchange of information through a network, the information  
5 exchange support apparatus comprising:

reception means for receiving exchange request  
information containing information to be exchanged and  
information for identifying an exchanging party;

exchange determination means for determining whether or  
10 not information exchange is permitted using the received  
exchange request information; and

transmission means for transmitting the information to  
be exchanged to the exchanging party if the exchange  
determination means determines that information exchange is  
15 permitted,

wherein, if the exchange request information from the  
mutual exchanging parties is already received, the exchange  
determination means determines that information exchange is  
permitted.

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2. The information exchange support apparatus according to  
claim 1,

wherein, if the types of information to be exchanged  
contained in the exchange request information from the mutual  
25 exchanging parties match, the exchange determination means

determines that information exchange is permitted.

3. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 1,

5        wherein, if the types and the contents of information to be exchanged contained in the exchange request information from the mutual exchanging parties match, the exchange determination means determines that information exchange is permitted.

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4. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 1,

      wherein, if the types or the contents of information to be exchanged match a predetermined type or content of information to be exchanged, the exchange determination means  
15        determines that information exchange is permitted.

5. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 1,

20        wherein the exchange request information contains information indicating the type of information to be exchanged requested for the exchanging party, and

      wherein, if the types of information to be exchanged contained in the exchange request information from the mutual  
25        exchanging parties match the requested type for the exchanging

party, the exchange determination means determines that information exchange is permitted.

6. The information exchange support apparatus according to  
5 claim 1,

wherein the exchange request information contains information indicating the type and the content of information to be exchanged requested for the exchanging party, and

wherein, if the types and the contents of information  
10 to be exchanged contained in the exchange request information from the mutual exchanging parties match the requested type and content for the exchanging party, the exchange determination means determines that information exchange is permitted.

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7. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 1,

wherein the exchange request information contains content report information indicating the content of  
20 information to be exchanged contained in the exchange request information, and

wherein, if the content report information matches the content of the received information to be exchanged, the exchange determination means determines that information  
25 exchange is permitted.

8. The information exchange support apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 7,

wherein the reception means receives the exchange request information using an electronic mail system or a Web page.

9. The information exchange support apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 8,

wherein the transmission means transmits the information to be exchanged using an electronic mail system or a Web page.

10. The information exchange support apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 9, further comprising:

preliminary disclosure means for preliminarily disclosing the information to be exchanged for the exchanging party,

wherein, if consent information indicating exchange consent is received from the mutual exchanging parties after the preliminary disclosure means preliminarily discloses the information to be exchanged, the exchange determination means determines that information exchange is permitted.

11. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 10,

wherein the exchange request information contains preliminary disclosure and consent required/not required information indicating whether or not exchange consent is required, of information to be exchanged of the exchanging party, and

wherein, if the consent required/not required information indicates required, the preliminary disclosure means preliminarily discloses the information to be exchanged for the exchanging party.

12. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 10 or 11,

wherein the preliminary disclosure means discloses the information to be exchanged in a mode in which the exchanging party cannot save all information to be exchanged.

13. The information exchange support apparatus according to claim 12,

wherein the preliminary disclosure means discloses the information to be exchanged using an electronic mail system or a Web page.

14. The information exchange support apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 13,

wherein, when information exchange is executed at least

among three parties, if the exchange request information of all parties are all already received, the exchange determination means determines that information exchange is permitted.

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15. An information exchange support program for causing a computer to function as an information exchange support apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 14.

10 16. An information exchange support method for supporting exchange of information through a network, the information exchange support apparatus comprising:

a reception step of receiving exchange request information containing information to be exchanged and  
15 information for identifying an exchanging party;

an exchange determination step of determining whether or not information exchange is permitted using the received exchange request information; and

a transmission step of transmitting the information to  
20 be exchanged to the exchanging party if the exchange determination step determines that information exchange is permitted,

wherein, if the exchange request information from the mutual exchanging parties is already received, the exchange  
25 determination steps determines that information exchange is

permitted.